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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BRASILIA 002863

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/21/2014

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SUBJECT: BRAZIL-HAITI: READOUT OF PRESIDENTIAL ENVOY'S
ASSESSMENTS, 22 NOVEMBER 2004

REF: A. BRASILIA 2799 AND 2764

1B. PORT AU PRINCE 2325

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR DENNIS W. HEARNE. REASONS:

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11. (C) Summary. Presidential Foreign Affairs Advisor Marcos Aurelio Garcia and his deputy, Marcel Biato, returned from a mid-November fact-finding mission to Haiti with the strong view that Aristide must not be allowed back into Haitian politics under any circumstances, Biato told PolCouns in a 19 November meeting at the presidency. The dominant impression gathered over several days meeting with multiple sources is that Aristide is a criminal who should be prosecuted, but still a powerful "shadow" over Haiti that inspires both terror and ill-founded hopes among many. Hence Garcia and Biato brought back to the GOB the key assessment that the "grand strategic question" now is how to quickly create hope for the future among Haitians that is decoupled from Aristide, and specific GOB views outlined below on requirements for stability, assistance programs and political dialogue flow from that question, according to Biato. The highly negative assessment of Aristide by this influential advisor to President Lula da Silva will likely inform GOB policies and actions henceforth. End summary.

Aristide:

12. (C) Garcia and Biato returned from their mid-November fact-finding mission to Haiti with a strong view that Aristide must not be allowed back into Haitian politics under any circumstances, that he is "a shadow over the country" and should be "exorcised," if possible by some form of trial in Haiti, Biatio told PolCoun. Biato allowed that Garcia had traveled to Haiti believing that Aristide was a political reality that might have to be considered as a factor in political dialogues. However, after 27 meetings with government officials, diplomats, UN officials, church leaders, military sources, and moderate Lavalas figures (who would only meet with Garcia after he publicly denounced Aristide in Port au Prince), Garcia came away from Haiti viewing Aristide as a completely unacceptable actor, "a mobster" involved in a range of illegal activity who "orders assassinations by cell phone," Biato said.

13. (C) Biato (strictly protect on this) said Garcia's highly negative assessment of Aristide is being heard by Lula and the senior GOB leadership, and will be factored into any consideration of sending an unofficial Brazilian emissary to meet with Aristide (a possibility reported previously in ref a). Instead, Biato opined that the GOB may communicate to South African President Mbeki its concerns about the apparent freedom Aristide enjoys in inciting violence and provocations from his South African enclave.

14. (C) The "exorcism" of Aristide is essential because he inspires both terror and "what passes for hope" among so many in Haiti's masses, Biato said. The "grand strategic question is how to create hope for the future among Haitians that is not linked to Aristide." Biato said. From that question flow several of the specific policy and practical assessments that Garcia brought back from his trip, which also tend to reinforce the GOB view that progress must move simultaneously in establishing stability and order, starting real political engagement, and most importantly, bringing to bear assistance projects that have an immediate and positive effect on the population. Progress on all fronts needs to move ahead quickly, "because time is on Aristide's side," Biato said.

Stability and Public Order:

15. (C) The GOB assessed that the threat to general stability appears to have diminished after "Operation Baghdad" dissipated, although crime and disturbances continue. MINUSTAH's commander indicated to Garcia that force levels expected on the ground by the end of the year should be sufficient for maintaining general control, Biato said. Biato noted that Brazil deployed a plus-up of 250 marines and support personnel, 44 vehicles (including armored personnel carriers) and provisions on 18 November from Rio. He said the GOB is also planning to send an army engineering battalion

for civil works projects as part of its scheduled December rotation. However, he stressed that the GOB does not plan a substantial increase in its MINUSTAH contingent, in part owing to domestic political sensitivities about the mission in Haiti.

16. (C) Garcia returned concerned about the overall law enforcement situation and the dysfunctionality of the national police, Biato said, and the GOB will be trying to work with others on police training and related initiatives.

Assistance:

17. (C) Of the more than one billion dollars in assistance potentially available for Haiti, little has started to flow, and at the current rate, the GOB fears there will not be appreciable progress visible to the public before the elections, Biato said. A main challenge continues to be a lack of reliable interlocutors and institutions for turning assistance funds into viable projects, so donors are standing off, Biato said. Specific steps the GOB will pursue include:

--The GOB will pressure the EU, U.S. and others to accelerate release of funds (e.g., the GOB met with other donors on the margins of the Ibero-American summit, FM Amorim spoke to the visiting German foreign minister, Garcia spoke recently to French officials and Lula will soon call EU Commission President Durao Baroso, Biato said).

--Coupled with this, the GOB will urge the UN to place competent aid technicians on the ground asap, headed by a senior UN official experienced both in large-scale program management and dealing with the New York bureaucracy, Biato said.

--Biato said the GOB is also planning to approach the World Bank regarding a USD 70 million dollar loan that is available for Haiti, but not released yet owing to Haiti's 50 million debt to the Bank. The GOB, in coordination with Canada, plans to loan the IGOH the required 50 million to pay the debt off and trigger release of the World Bank loan. Once the GOB is repaid and other adjustments are made, the GOB estimates 25 to 30 million would be immediately deployable for assistance efforts.

--The GOB is working with Canada and hopes to approach others about quickly designing and implementing joint projects in health, sanitation and utilization of such resources as Haiti has, Biato said. Biato indicated he will approach the Mission about possible U.S.- Brazil joint projects when the GOB has developed more specific plans, but opined that the single most dramatic U.S. contribution would be an immediate adjustment of textile quotas to benefit Haitian producers.

--The GOB alone plans to send Brazilian technicians to assist Haitians in enhancing their production of manioc and cashews (the island's main export). Brazil will also build a garbage recycling facility and plans to invite other donors to support it in exporting to Haiti a successful Brazilian program for building affordable housing (approximately USD 1,000 per house).

Political Engagement:

18. (C) Following Garcia's visit the GOB has the view that elements of the sprawling Lavalas are willing to be part of a national dialogue, if Aristide's intimidation efforts can be diminished and if what many Lavalas members view as IGOH repression is curtailed, Biato said. Opponents of Lavalas also indicated to Garcia that there are "moderate" and "intellectual" elements in Lavalas with whom they would be willing to engage. The UN should expand on this baseline for dialogue with a series of conferences on political, economic, social and reconciliation topics, Biato said.

19. (C) Biato indicated that the GOB also plans to invite a number of political figures from Haiti to a December OAS conference in Brasilia on political party development, to provide exposure of isolated Haitian political leaders to international concepts of democracy and party politics.

110. (C) Garcia left Haiti convinced of the importance of concentrating now on election mechanics, Biato said. The GOB will work with others on efforts to make Haiti's election commission functional and will send to Haiti over 10,000 of Brazil's highly reliable computer voting machines. Political efforts of all kinds will "fall into a vacuum," however, if there is not apparent progress on aid projects, Biato opined.

111. (C) Comment: Garcia is an influential advisor to the president and Garcia's fact-finding mission to Haiti produced a realistic and negative assessment of Aristide that, we believe, will inform Lula's approach to this issue and GOB actions henceforth. We will be attentive to the possibility

that the GOB may reach out to Mbeki to underscore their concerns about Aristide, and we will also be ready to discuss with the GOB any specific assistance proposals they present to us for possible bilateral collaboration.

Chicola